Cicadas have invaded the Charlotte area for the first time in thirteen years, and their back with vengeance. These eerie sounding, red-eyed flying insects can be found all over Charlotte in backyards, greenways, and along street corners.

This type of Cicada only emerges every thirteen years in a few southern and Midwest states. They take over in full force for about six weeks only to mate and burrow back into the ground to grow for the next thirteen years.

Cicadas do no real harm to people or plants, they just provide an unwanted annoyance to Charlottians.

“The cicadas have taken over my backyard,” said junior, Lindsay Cosentino. “They are so loud and they leave their molted skin all over the place.”

The molted skin Lindsay refers to is the cicada’s exoskeleton that they periodically shed during their short lives.

Adult male cicadas produce a loud buzzing noise, comparable to a 1950s alarm clock, as their mating call. The female cicadas are mute creatures that lay their eggs in the split stem of leaves. As these eggs hatch they produce “nymph cicadas” which proceed to fall from the leaves and burrow into the soil where they will live for the next thirteen years.

This breed of cicada is known as Brood XIX, which appears every thirteen years. As opposed to their relative, the native North Carolina cicada, that makes an appearance every seventeen years.

These loud pests can be heard very clearly on the Four Mile Creek Greenway in South Charlotte.

“When I took my run the other day I had to turn my ipod on full blast just to drown out the annoying noise coming from the trees,” said junior, Caty Delcasino.

Cicadas may seem like annoying little pest that serve no purpose, but residents in some Latin American countries may disagree. Cicadas are a delicacy in some foreign countries, that serve as an excellent source of protein when prepared stir-fried or candied.

This would explain why dogs, birds, and other animals enjoy munching on the crunchy little cicadas so much.

The Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation board has been meticulously tracking the movement of the cicadas. They have traced their path all the way from Rock Hill into many parts of South Charlotte, and new appearances are still being reported.

“I just want the cicadas to go away. It seems like the noise will never stop and I would really like to be able to use my backyard again,” said Cosentino.

The good news is that the season is nearing the end and the residents of Charlotte will be Cicada free for the next thirteen years.